



THE NEW AVENGERS







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ANNUAL



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THE GAMBIT GAMBIT

It's a good plan, Comrade Gorsky," Sagarin said, examining the documents on his desk. "But Steed won't fall for it. He's far too wily for that..."

"So we abandon it without trying?" Gorsky asked, his voice rising, his temper suddenly flaring as he envisioned months of work being wasted because of one word from his superior. "What is this Steed, some kind of superman? Anyone can be killed if the method is right..."

Sagarin fixed Gorsky's small pig-like eyes with a penetrating stare. "John Steed has been my opponent for fifteen years," he said heavily. "I respect him too much to insult him with an untried assassination plan..."

Gorsky cringed at this sudden outburst, trying to shrink his fat body back as far as possible into the chair. Seeing this, Sagarin's craggy face slowly cracked into a slight, twisted smile.

"However," Sagarin began, "I think we might try it on a lesser opponent. It seems..." Sagarin paused to look back at the documents, "There are three agents likely to become available for the mission in the near future. Very well, Comrade Gorsky, you have three chances to kill Mike Gambit. If you succeed, we'll have at least broken up the team... then we can go on for Steed. If you fail..."

"Siberia?" Gorsky tried to make a joke of it, but found no trace of laughter from his superior.

"You have a month to prepare..." Sagarin said coldly, ending the interview.

"George!" Gambit's voice had a tone of pleasant surprise as he opened the door of his apartment. "Haven't seen you for weeks... come on in and pour yourself a drink..."

"Thanks, Mike... I think I will..." George Lyons said, moving past Gambit as he turned to lock the door carefully behind them. Even with old friends, Gambit's training wouldn't let him take chances. He turned grinning, toward Lyons.

"So, what have you been up to recently?"

"Bit of this, bit of that..." Lyons began, his back turned to Gambit as he reached out for a glass from the small bar at one end of the room. "Eastern Europe mostly..."

Gambit started to walk toward him, then paused as he saw Lyons turning. In his hand was a snub-nosed automatic pistol, with a bulky silencer attached... and the gun was pointed directly at Gambit. Lyons finger began to tighten on the trigger...

For an instant, Gambit hesitated: Lyons had top security clearance, and was an old friend beside. But a gun was still a gun, no matter who held it...

Gambit hurled himself forward, going down even as there was a coughing report from the pistol, the

bullet slicing through the air uncomfortably close to his shoulder. He hit the floor, rolling sideways toward Lyons, and as he came onto his back his right leg lashed upwards, catching his foe low in the stomach. Lyons started to fold up, the pistol spitting another bullet into the floor. Gambit's other foot came up to kick him in the wrist, sending the gun spinning across the room.

Gambit bounced rapidly to his feet, but by then Lyons had recovered, scampering across the room to the wall where Gambit's collection of weaponry was displayed... weapons from many countries, some new, most old... neatly arranged in racks along the entire side of the room. Gambit started to chase after Lyons, then stopped in his tracks as Lyons turned, an assegai in his hands.

Gambit backed off as the long-headed spear thrust toward his face, one hand reaching out toward the racks. His fingers closed round the hilt of an antique Japanese samurai sword, and he swung it round, still in its scabbard, to bat the assegai aside.

Leaping back to give himself more room to manoeuvre, Gambit found the wall at his back. There was no going back now, then. He drew the glinting steel blade, still razor-sharp after two hundred years, from its curved scabbard, took a two-handed grip on the long, laced hilt, and drew the sword up close to his face. Lyons came forward, thrusting the spear-point towards his eyes. There was a sharp clash of metal as Gambit flicked the assegai aside, the sword forcing it down toward the right. Gambit stepped forward past the spear-point, his leg lashing up in a high side kick which caught Lyons on the shoulder, spinning him backwards.

Stepping away from the wall, Gambit spread his feet wide, bending his knees to lower his centre of gravity, ready to move in any direction. Eyes glinting like the steel of his blade, he stared hard at Lyons, and saw the first signs of panic on the man's face. He whirled the sword in a flashing arc in front of him, and Lyons tentatively raised the spear in front of him, holding it in both hands like a staff. With a single, quick blow, Gambit sliced the spear-shaft in half. An instant later, the sword-point was resting lightly at Lyons' throat.

"Now then, George, what's all this about?" Gambit grated. Lyons opened his mouth, clicked his teeth, rolled his eyes... and collapsed. He was dead before he hit the ground. Gambit looked briefly at the clean, shining blade in his hand, then down at his old friend. There wasn't a mark on him, but Lyons was quite definitely dead...

Sitting in a hired car just across the street, Gorsky bit his fingernails with frustration as he waited for Lyons to reappear from the apartment building.

As Lyons closed in, Gambit's hand tightened on the hilt of the ancient samurai sword.



Fifteen minutes had passed and there had been no sign. When, after another two minutes, another car pulled up and Steed and Purdey got out, he knew that his first attempt had failed. When they had disappeared into the building, Gorsky hit the accelerator and drove off at high speed. There would be other opportunities...

The following day saw Steed, Purdey and Gambit sitting round a low table at Steed's palatial country house, innumerable files and reports spread before them. An air of baffled gloom hung over the place. They had all known George Lyons well... all called him a friend. Now they had to regard him as a dead enemy...

"The medical reports show no sign of drugs in the body," Purdey began, flicking the pages despondently. "No history of heart trouble, no major illnesses, no mental instability. He just went crazy, attacked Gambit, and dropped dead. For no reason at all..."

"There must be a reason," Steed said. "It's just that we haven't found it yet. What did he say to you Gambit?"

"Just that he'd been in Eastern Europe... there wasn't much time for anything else..." Gambit shook his head. "But how many agents have we had in Eastern Europe in the last couple of months... a hundred? There's no clue there..."

"It's the only starting point we've got though," said Steed. "We'll have to check out all his associates for the last three months, and I want to know the names of all our other agents who were in Eastern Europe at the same time he was..."

"We haven't got all that material here," Purdey began wearily. "I suppose that means another long, boring afternoon in Records..."

"For you, perhaps," Gambit said, getting to his feet. "But I know one person who fits into both categories: Brooksbank. He was Lyons' controller on his last three missions. I'll go over and see him..."

Gambit's car pulled into the kerb, engine growling, outside the big Victorian house in north London where Brooksbank lived and worked. It had long since been converted into flats, and Brooksbank occupied the top-floor apartment, completely unrecognised by the everyday couples living in the rest of the building. Gambit locked the car door and started up the short garden path to the house, not noticing a completely different hired car pull up nearby. Gorsky was keeping a close eye on his target.

Gambit hit Brooksbank's doorbell, then waited until the intercom by the door crackled into life. "Who is it?" Brooksbank asked, from somewhere high above.

"It's Gambit," came the reply. "And it's important..."

"You'll have to hang on, Mike..." the intercom gave a steely edge to Brooksbank's voice. "The electric release isn't working... I'll have to come down and let you in the door myself. Just stay right where

You are..."

Gambit shrugged and turned around. There was a sudden cold gust of wind, and he pulled his jacket tighter round him, looking up toward the massing grey clouds above. It looked like rain...

Something caught Gambit's eye... something plummeting straight down toward him from above... something small and oblong-shaped. Instinctively, Gambit threw himself aside.

The grenade exploded about three feet above the ground, and in an instant there was smoke, shrapnel and an awesome roar. Window glass showered over Gambit's prone body, and then it was hidden by the smoke.

Gorsky reach for the door handle, eager to get out of the car and see if Gambit really was dead. Then he thought better of it. By the time the smoke cleared, the front door of the house was opening...

Brooksbank came out, looking round warily, holding a machine pistol in one hand. Cautiously, he moved toward Gambit, lying face down on the ground, one arm underneath his body. Deliberately, Brooksbank raised the pistol in a double-handed grip, drawing aim on Gambit's head.

Gambit rolled over suddenly, taking his would-be assassin completely by surprise. The small pistol in his hand, previously unseen, barked once. Shot through the heart at point-blank range, Brooksbank tumbled backwards and lay still...

Brushing debris and concrete-dust from his clothes, Gambit got unsteadily to his feet, aware of a warm trickle of blood from the back of his head, bruised and pained from innumerable bruises and lacerations, temporarily but completely defensed. If he had seen the grenade a second later, there would have been no time to throw himself flat.

Normally, Gambit would have heard the car engine start up immediately, but now, as he stared down at Brooksbank's body, he only became aware of Gorsky's car speeding away from the corner of his eye. But the frantic speed at which Gorsky was driving was enough to tip him off. His hands still shaking, Gambit raised his gun once more, and fired.

The bullet shattered the rear window of the car, but it was screeching round a corner, out of sight. Gambit started toward his own car, intent on pursuit... but then his bruised and battered body gave out on him, and he collapsed over the garden wall, unconscious.

"You'll live..." were the first words Gambit heard, opening his eyes to find himself in a hospital bed with the beautiful Purdey at his side. "Which is more than can be said for Brooksbank..." she continued.

"And you're lucky you're not in jail..." Steed's face came into view. "You wouldn't believe the strings we had to pull to get you out of this... the entire place was swarming with policemen when we got there. Fortunately, the chief constable's an old friend. Still, we found the car with the short-out window... hired by a Mr. Smith, who gave a false address..."

Throwing himself aside, Gambit avoided death by inches.



"So what do we do now?" Gambit asked, tentatively stretching his aching limbs.

"For you, rest and recuperation..." Steed smiled.

"We're sending you to Rotherley for two weeks..."

"Rotherley? That's a bit public isn't it? Minimal security..."

"Exactly," Steed said, sounding anything but reassuring. "Now we know that someone else is involved, we can't lock you up too tightly, can we?"

"So I'm a target," Gambit replied. "Thanks a lot..."

Two days had passed: days in which Gambit had been transferred to the Rotherley convalescent home, and Purdey had spent long hours in the records department, while Steed moved back and forth between the two of them, checking the progress of each. As he came into the records office, Purdey looked up wearily, a bundle of computer print-outs in her hand.

"I've seen so many names connected with Lyons and Brooksbank I think I'm getting hypnotised..." she smiled thinly. Steed's reaction was instantaneous...

"Hypnotism! Of course, that's how they did it... they hypnotised Lyons and Brooksbank while they were in Eastern Europe. Then all it would take would be one word to activate a post-hypnotic command... to kill Gambit..."

"And failure would trigger another command... self-destruction. That's why Lyons just dropped dead when he missed killing Gambit..."

"You say Brooksbank organised twenty seven missions this year..." Steed continued, hot on the trail now. "What were the personnel on the last mission..."

Purdey turned back to the computer: seconds later, she had the answer in her hand: "Brooksbank, Lyons... and Loomis..."

"Where's Loomis now?"

"His recovery from a multiple fracture of the leg... at Rotherley..."

Without a word, both of them were racing through the door.

His fat bulk cramped in the small hire car, Gorsky waited on a rise overlooking the Rotherley home, watching through field glasses. There was Gambit, insufferably fit, it seemed to Gorsky, out on the archery range in the grounds. He ground his teeth as he saw Gambit score yet another gold.

Gambit was reaching for another arrow when he became aware of another patient coming up to join him. He turned and saw the newcomer, bow and quiver in hand, wheeling himself closer. The man had one leg swathed in a bulky plaster up to the thigh, protruding straight ahead of his wheel chair.

"Friendly match?" Gambit asked, smiling. "You can go... say, twenty feet closer, in view of the wheel chair..."

"This is quite close enough to the target for me..." the man said calmly. "You're Gambit, aren't you?"

"That's right, mate... and you're?"

"Loomis!" Steed's voice suddenly shouted the name. "Get away from him, Gambit!"

Gambit hesitated, looking toward Steed and Purdey running across the lawns toward him, looking at the seemingly harmless, crippled Loomis, wondering if he should try to get the bow away from him. Loomis swung the wheelchair round to face him, legs protruding, waist high... and in that instant, Gambit knew he had to throw himself aside.

The double-barrelled shotgun mounted under Loomis's leg, hidden in the plaster cast, blasted hot lead with a deafening roar, ripping through the air just above Gambit's back as he dived to the ground.

Purdey reached Loomis first, fists bunched and ready to strike. But by then it was too late. Loomis had already slumped forward in the chair, sprawling toward the smoking end of his plaster cast. Gambit got slowly to his feet.

"He's dead," Purdey announced. "Failure killed him, just like the others..."

At the edge of the grounds, Gorsky swore viciously as he saw Gambit, unharmed, picking up his bow and quiver. He had used up his three men now, and all that remained in prospect were several long cold years in the Siberian wastelands... unless...

Gorsky struggled out of the car, fitting together a collapsible sub-machine gun and running forward. If he could wipe out all three of them now, he might yet save himself...

Bullets were already thudding into the ground before Steed and the others saw Gorsky. Instantly, Steed grabbed Purdey and dragged her down behind Loomis's wheelchair, the only available cover in a hundred yards. And as Gambit looked toward Gorsky running toward them, raging and spraying bullets, he realised that they were all unarmed... except for the bow in his hand...

Bow and arrow against sub-machine gun. Gambit nocked the arrow and drew, lining up his target. The range was extreme, Gorsky was a moving target, and any moment a bullet might cut him down. Gambit tried to clear his mind of everything... to think of nothing... to let the arrow shoot itself...

Almost without realising it, Gambit released the shaft, then stood there watching its flight as the bullets cut the air around him. With almost infinite slowness, it seemed to Gambit, it arced down toward its target, and thudded into Gorsky's shoulder. Gorsky went down with a hoarse cry and lay still.

"This one isn't dead," Purdey said, somewhat surprised, when they reached Gorsky.

"I think that wraps it up then," Steed said. "We've run through the hypnotised puppets... this one's the puppet-master, blowing his cover when his plan failed. By the way, that was nice shooting, Gambit... he certainly got the point..."

"Thanks, Steed..." Gambit said, feeling his bruises suddenly begin to ache again. "But the fewer 'arrowing' experiences I have like that, the better I'll like it..."

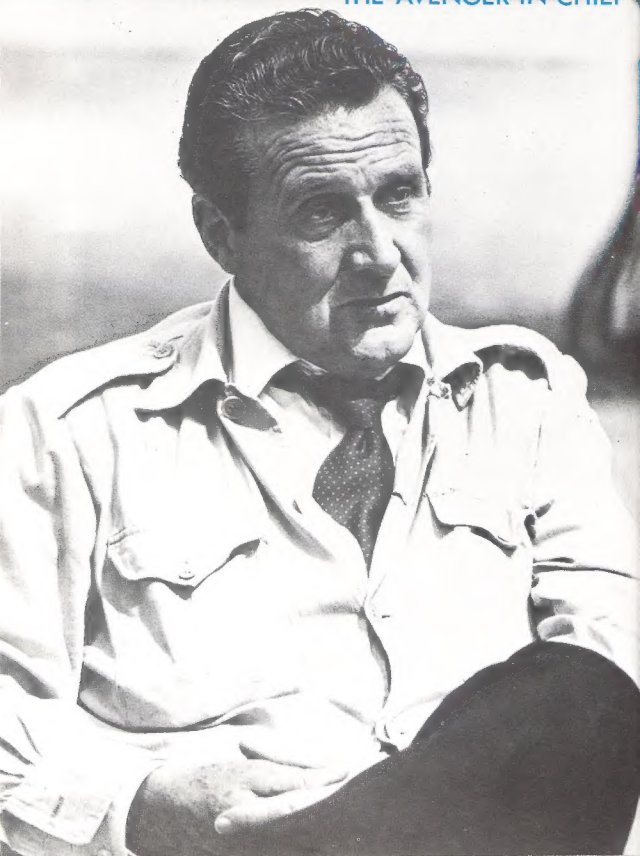
The arrow found its target and Gorsky slumped to the ground.





PATRICK MACNEE

THE AVENGER IN CHIEF



'I'm supposed to be a descendant of Robin Hood. If he existed, Robin Hood was an Earl of Huntingdon. My grandmother was the daughter of Admiral Hastings, who was the brother of the Earl of Huntingdon. The Earls of Huntingdon are my cousins on my mother's side...'

It could almost be John Steed talking. Such lineage would suit him down to the inevitable brolly and bowler. But no, it's Daniel Patrick Macnee. Steed's autocratic alter-ego for the last eighteen years.

A recent publicity story on TV's favourite hero began: 'It would be difficult to imagine the *The Avengers* without Patrick Macnee as the stalwart John Steed...'

Difficult? It would be downright impossible...

While other and notable actors went on to succeed Johnny Weissmuller, Sean Connery and Roger Moore as Tarzan, James Bond and The Saint, no one — but no one — could take over the mantle of Steed. Pat Macnee has undeniably made the role his own since 1960. He has, in one very appropriate word, tailored the character to his own cloth. He remains as much the coolly elegant John Steed as is the hero's cane, buttonhole and ever-present bottle (or two) of the best bubbly.

When Patrick Macnee first created the role (in the days when Ian Hendry was his crime-fighting partner), he was a swashbuckling 38. Today, he is 58. And still the doughty knight dowsing the modern-day technological dragons in the intriguing business of avenging. He is still the master Avenger. No. 11

How does he do it? By cutting down the Bollinger intake, for starters. 'A friend of mine gave me a book called *Food is the Best Medicine*. Since then I've cut out all meat, sugar, salt, tea, coffee and most alcohol — apart from the occasional glass of wine. I exist on an almost totally vegetarian diet. I eat only raw or slightly cooked foods. I'm really looking after myself.'

Around the world, wherever and whomever he goes — films in

Cyprus and Malta, on stage downunder for *The Secretary Bird* in Australia or 16 months in *Sleuth* on Broadway in New York — everyone remembers him as the man with the thoroughly disarming smile and bowler hat who entered their lives, their very families, via the television screen.

'You're that nice man from *The Avengers*,' they chorus. Some, admittedly, confuse the name with Patrick McGeehan's. But they always get the show right. Macnee doesn't seem to mind either approach. 'I figure it's just nice to be recognised. They know me not as they would a movie star — but more like some old piano that sits in the corner of a room which they've grown accustomed to. The series generates that kind of warmth. It's that kind of show.'

Macnee understands the power of television. He ought to... Though he never quite made it in movies — unlike his cousin, David Niven — Pat Macnee is something of a TV pioneer. Soon after the war, when the medium was still a bawling infant worldwide, he played Laertes in George More O'Ferrall's TV production of *Hamlet*, winner of the first Gold Medal for TV drama. He also worked in almost forty other plays before taking up an offer from Canada in 1952 — which resulted in the thirty live plays until 1958.

'It was the golden period of Canadian expression. And some of the people who were part of it became very famous.' He cites Christopher Plummer; Norman Jewison, now a Hollywood director of hit films like *In The Heat of the Night*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Rollerball* and *F.I.S.T.*; Lorne Green, father-to-be of the *Bonanza* bunch; Barry Morse, from *The Fugitive* and *Space 1999*. And, of course, the actor friend who had invited Macnee to Toronto in the first place — David Greene, now a top Los Angeles TV name since directing *Rich Man*, *Poor Man* and other shows.

There was also a certain set-designer, name of Sydney Newman... Macnee's most important

Canadian connection of all, as we will reveal later in his story.

Apart from *The Avengers* episodes — new and old — Macnee has also been seen in more than 50 major TV projects, made in either Hollywood or New York. His credits include three of the prestigious *Playhouse 90* spots and two more for that supreme maestro of suspense, Alfred Hitchcock. Why, he even turned up as a sheriff in a *Rawhide* Western tale, British accent and all!

In Britain, he helped produce the renowned TV series based upon Sir Winston Churchill's book, *The Valiant Years*. He took charge of the London-shot section of the series, interviewing such war-horses as Montgomery, Alanbrooke, Slim and Mountbatten,



And yet... when the premiere *Avengers* series first shut up in 1969, Patrick Macnee couldn't get a job in England. He returned to America, 'I work over there all the time — on stage or in television.'

For example, Peter Falk recruited him for a *Californio* story, which proved a kind of actors' holiday episode — filmed on a cruise ship sailing from San Francisco to Acapulco, in Mexico. Nice work if you can get it. More recently, Macnee co-starred with another top TV-made British star, Roger Moore, in *Shogun Holmes in New York*. Moore was Holmes and Macnee made a spirited Dr. Watson in this elementary TV movie.

But how does a socially privileged Edonian son of a Scots racehorse trainer get into acting? The answer is Eton, itself. 'I played Queen Victoria in the *Victoria Regina* play at school,' he recalls with a dry smile. 'After the war, I did the play again, closer to home as it were — in repertory at Windsor. Only this time I played Prince Albert. So I've done the old — husband and wife!'

His schoolmates at Eton were a close-knit group, which perhaps explains why so many of them went into the arts, in one form or another. They included TV journalist Ludovic Kennedy; jazzman Humphrey Lyttelton, playwright Dennis Canner, Robin Davis, who became principal of the Royal College of Art; Simon Phipps, one of the best TV chaplains, and stage director Michael Benthall. It was for Benthall that Macnee appeared in the Old Vic production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Edinburgh Festival, on Broadway and then touring throughout America, with Robert Helpmann, Stanley Holloway and Ludovic Kennedy's wife, Moira Shearer.

For the first six months after leaving Eton, Macnee — the future TV toff — did little more than milking cows on a farm. Then, he decided to try acting for a living. He learned his trade (and met his first wife Barbara Douglas) at the Webber Douglas School — years later the launching pad for fellow *Avenger*, Gareth Hunt.

Pat Macnee had only just begun his new profession — in the unlikely role of Laurie in *Little Women*, opposite Barbara as Jo — when his mother suggested he stopped being a little woman and join the war. He was understudying the lead opposite the late Vivien Leigh in *The Doctor's Dilemma* when he joined the Navy in 1941. He spent most of the war in the icy North Sea area, commanding a tiny MTB — motor-torpedo boat. One in six MTBs's only ever returned from duty.

'On every trip I fully expected to die, but my luck was miraculous. In 1944, when our flotilla was at Portsmouth for the Normandy D-Day invasion, I suddenly went down with bronchitis. It was my one and only night of illness in the entire war... it was the night my boat was sunk. In hours, I lost most of my friends. I came out of the Navy dated at still being alive.'

'He returned to the West End stage in two plays: in *The White Devil* he had a single sentence in the script. 'This is not true, Madam.' He wasn't even listed in the programme but impressed the major critic Harold Hobson of

The Sunday Times. 'He said only five words,' wrote Hobson, 'yet for me it was the most striking moment in a performance in which such moments are not few.' The review literally made Macnee's name. Pat made sure Hobson discovered his name and the critic reprinted most of his review the following week — this time naming the actor involved.

He was, though, a fledgling talent. He filled in his day with film and TV work — being among a distinguished company of 'extras' in Laurence Olivier's classic film of *Hamlet*. He joined his cousin David Niven in *The Elusive Pimpernel* film, spending most of his scene submerged in the river Loire in France. He became a father. Rupert was born in 1947, Jennie three years later. He made films like *The Fatal Night*, missed out on the lead in *Thursday's Child* which got Stewart Granger off the ground... and most ironically of all, he was turned down for any role in *The Cenci*. Sea film about the North Sea war because 'you don't look the naval type, old boy!' He got his own back by starring in the Naval saga of *The Battle of the*

River Plate, the Royal Performance Film of 1956. (Indeed, he also appeared in the 1957 Royal make-up, Hollywood's *Les Girls*, as well.)

No wonder, he took off for Canada... and later, Hollywood with many of his Toronto mates. Always seemed to be working... I never did make any real money until *The Avengers*, 20 years after I'd started in this business.

And so to the birth of John Steed, and the evolution of Pat Macnee, television superstar. He happened to be in London for a short spell. And the all-important phone call came from one of his Canadian TV mates, ex-military designer and now producer Sydney Newman. 'We're thinking of doing a television series. *The Avengers*. Twenty-six parts.'

'Why call it *The Avengers*?' Pat Pat. 'What are they avenging?'

'Who cares,' said Sydney. 'It's a great title... And Pat, you could be this fellow I've been thinking about. A sort of George Sanders... terrifically sardonic and... You ought to wear a mousie... though.' Macnee, however,

had become a successful producer with the Churchilliana series and was not too sure about acting again. Anyway, he refused to put back to wear or grow a mousie. That was more Niven's style, not Macnee's, nor indeed any ex-Navy officer's. So he did what many actors before and after him have done when faced with an offer they, in truth, are none too excited about. He asked for a lot of money — 'a ridiculously high sum.' And he got it.

John Steed was really born as soon as Macnee turned up on the set, dressed for the part in one of his own suits. Nothing very trendy, even by 1960 standards Sydney Newman shut down the gantry from the control room. 'It's no good, Pat. It's too dull. Your clothes... you might be anybody! You've got to be more way out. You're a fine actor, but the part has got no personality.'

Wounding words to any actor, Macnee went home and built up Steed from scratch. He thought of his father, the very little racehorse trainer, 'Shrimp' Macnee... of his Royal Navy commanding officer, 'an incredibly brave man and yet a dandy'... of the actors he had,

unconsciously, modelled his light comedy style after (David Niven, of course; Rex Harrison; and 'my particular idol', Cary Grant). He thought back to Niven's role in the movie they'd made together, the popish, witty Scarlet Pimpernel. He thought in fact, back to the days of Regency England, and imagined Steed in waistcoat jackets, embroidered waistcoats and drawstring trousers.

'Gradually, in mounting excitement, I visualised John Steed as an amalgam of these peoples and styles. And I decided to play Steed as a Beau Brummell with an interior of iron.' He went off to an expensive tailor, passed on his ideas with suits and waistcoats — new then, but commonplace almost these days as men's fashions have attempted to keep up with the stunning Steed style. He turned up for work on the second episode in his brand new togs. Complete with bowler and diamond earring!

Steed had well and truly arrived. A winning figure of



Macnee's imagination, more than of any scriptwriter's toil. For no matter what other media evaluation you may read, the truth is John Steed is not and never was Patrick Macnee. John Steed is, and always was, Patrick Macnee's idea of Patrick Macnee 'A dream projection of the man I would like to be — an unashamed romantic who would have enjoyed being a Regency Buck!'

Obviously, the Macnee imagery worked wonders for the series as a whole. The 80's Steed just happens to breed beautiful horses Macnee's father. And it was Pat, for instance, who later suggested dressing up his second lady partner, Honor Blackman's Mrs Cathy Gale in black leather. As Honor was somewhat shy of unarmed combat, he also introduced her to a French war hero chum, Rene Burdet 'the John Steed par excellence of the French Resistance'.

All the Avenging angels have been quick to heap praise upon their leading man for his old-world charm, courtesy and multifarious helpful suggestions for delineating a new, fresher version of each successive ideal woman partner. Ingrid Hafner, Honor Blackman, Julie Stevens, Diana Rigg, Linda Thorsen... and now Joanna Lumley.

There was, alas, a six-year gap between Steed and Linda's Tara King and his new adventures with Joanna's Purvey and Gareth Hunt's Gambit. Pat Macnee thought he'd seen the last of super-polished heroics. He was acting at the Chichester Festival when he had to go to the old Steed hunting grounds of Epsom studios to shoot a champagne commercial for French TV. Linda Thorsen was the star; *The Avengers* was the motif. 'and I was only there as a kind of reminder.'

Shooting ran late — the French lingo didn't help, apparently — and Macnee was 'in a rush to get back to the theatre when Rudolf Roffi of Paris asked him if he'd like to make another Avenging series. 'I certainly can't do it in French,' yelled Macnee, running to his car, and highly reminiscent of him refusing to wear a mous-

tache back in 1960.

'I forgot all about it,' Pat continues the story of the much-appauded comeback series. 'Six weeks later Brian Clemens rang me at the Schubert Theatre in Chicago, where I was appearing in *Absurd Person Singular*. He said it was no joke. *The Avengers* was going to be done again and they wanted me in it. I said send me a script. They never did. I didn't see a script until I came back to Britain. My daughter, Jennie, was very suspicious at first, she said there must be some kind of catch. But when I did get some scripts, I realised they were better than ever before. And there we were, doing it. Now it's almost as if I've never been away.'

Married and divorced twice (his second wife was another actress, Kate Woodville), Macnee lives the bachelor life at his Palm Springs bungalow in California. His daughter, Jennie, now 28, lives with him — 'a terrific Cordon Bleu cook.' Not many flying hours away is his

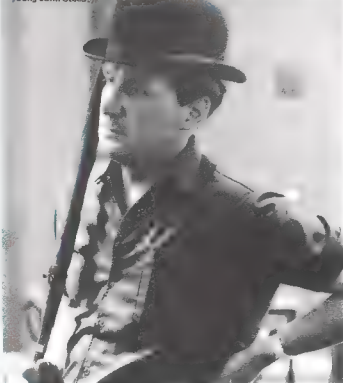
son, Rupert, 27, a TV documentary director in — you've guessed it — Canada. The Macnees' Canadian connection remains so firm that several of the new series were shot on location there.

Apart from his vegetarian diets, Macnee keeps in trim on the tennis court, swimming in the pool of his desert home, and taking long walks in the nearby mountain ranges. For relaxation, he reads and loves good conversation with a host of good friends.

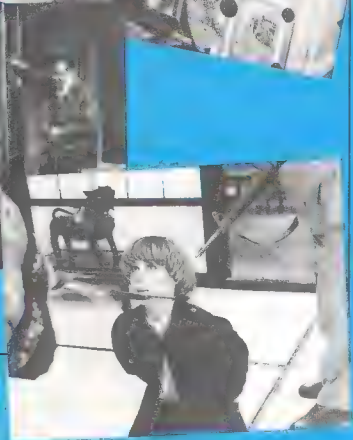
One fact is obvious — he has scant intention of putting his feet up just yet awhile. 'I'm not too sure that I ought to stay on too long as Steed,' he has declared, rather alarmingly. 'You can't have an arthritic secret agent — although I trust I'm still a long way off from that particular condition.' Pause. Then, he adds, 'I have a simple need.'

So do we. *The Avengers* just would not be even *The New Avengers* without Daniel Patrick Macnee.

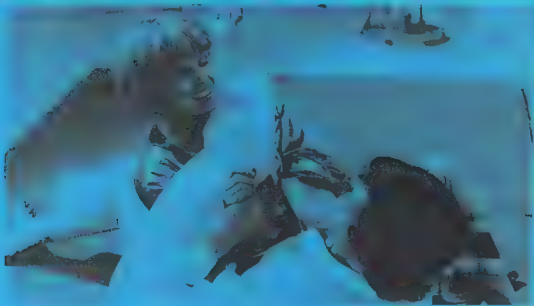
Patrick Macnee as young John Steed.



PURDEY AT RISK



Purdey and Gambit getting to grips



THE NEW AVENGERS



STORY BEGINS
ONE MORNING,
THE CRACK OF DAWN
JOHN STEED
ARRIVES AT PURDEY'S
FRONT DOOR...

YOU'RE A
HARD TASK-
MASTER... YOU
KNOW I HATE
GETTING UP
AT THIS HOUR!

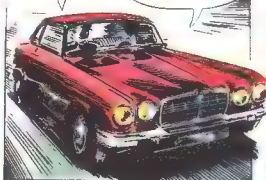
DON'T BLAME ME
FOR THE PLANE'S TIME-
TABLE... AND BESIDES,
WE DO HAVE TO MEET
A VERY IMPORTANT
PERSON!

LATER, ON THE WAY
TO THE AIRPORT..

CAN YOU TELL
ME WHO THIS
PERSON IS?

HONG KONG
HARRY... A REAL
SHADY DEALER.
HONG KONG BRANCH
WARNED ME HE
WAS COMING

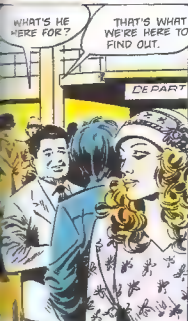
NOT READY
YET PURDEY?



MIDAS SECRET

WHAT'S HE
HERE FOR?

THAT'S WHAT
WE'RE HERE TO
FIND OUT.



HE'S
LATE!

HE'S ALWAYS
LATE! IT'S A TRICK
OF THE TRADE... PUTS
PEOPLE OFF THEIR
GUARD, YOU SEE...

AH, HERE HE COMES
HE'S SO FAT NOW I
HARDLY RECOGNISED HIM!



SPLUFF!



OOH!



STEED!

HARRY! WHO SHOT YOU?



STEED? HE... HE'S LEAKING GOLD DUST!

SO THAT'S WHY HE LOOKED SO BIG... HE'S WEARING A BELT STUFFED WITH GOLD!



CALL AN AMBULANCE!

NO!
NO AMBULANCE...
TAKE ME IN YOUR CAR, STEED...



LORD! HOW MUCH IS HERE, HARRY... HALF A MILLION?

I DON'T KNOW... I JUST CARRY THE STUFF...



HAVE IT YOUR WAY. IF WE TURNED YOU LOOSE, THOSE GUNMEN WOULD BE ON YOUR TAIL IN NO TIME!

NO! DON'T DO IT!



YOU'D BE SAFER IN PRISON, HARRY BEING CHARGED FOR GOLD TRAFFICKING IS LESS SERIOUS THAN A BULLET IN THE BACK



I ONLY KNOW I'M TO HIRE SOMEONE CALLED MIDAS. THE FEE IS HALF A MILLION!



HANDS UP! HAND THAT MAN OVER TO ME, MR STEED!



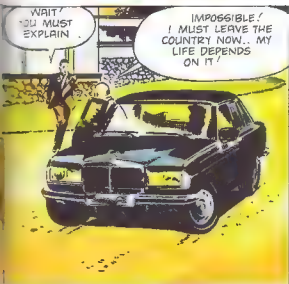
WELL, WELL... IT'S MR. SING, ATTACHE TO THE EMBASSY!



DON'T WORRY, MR. STEED...
MY COUNTRY IS NOT
INVOLVED IN THE MIDAS
OPERATION HARRY'S
LEAVING ON THE FIRST
PLANE!



I'LL TAKE HIS BAGGAGE...
AND A WORD BEFORE WE
LEAVE. DESTROY MIDAS,
MR STEED QUICKLY!



WAIT!
YOU MUST
EXPLAIN.

IMPOSSIBLE!
I MUST LEAVE THE
COUNTRY NOW... MY
LIFE DEPENDS
ON IT!



YOU LOOK WORRIED,
STEED. PENNY FOR
YOUR THOUGHTS!

THEY'D
COST YOU
HALF A
MILLION!



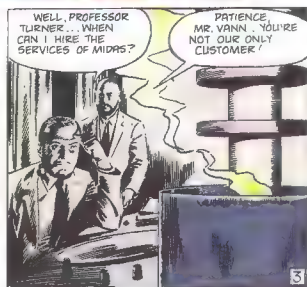
MIDAS... WASN'T HE THE
MYTHICAL KING WHO
COULD TURN EVERY-
THING TO GOLD?

PRECISELY
MY DEAR!



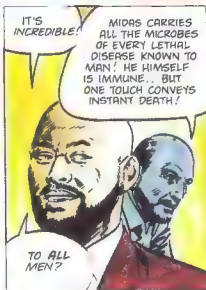
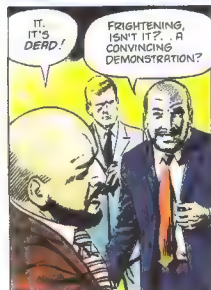
WHO WOULD CALL
- MYSELF MIDAS THESE
DAYS? A BANKER? A
JEWELLER? A MADMAN?

AS OUR FRIENDS
RACK THEIR
BRAINS OVER THE
MIDAS RIDDLE,
IN A LONDON
SUBURB TROUBLE
IS BREWING...
FOR THE MADMAN
EXISTS, AND
HE'S NOT FAR
AWAY!



WELL, PROFESSOR
TURNER... WHEN
CAN I HIRE THE
SERVICES OF MIDAS?

PATIENCE
MR. VANN. YOU'RE
NOT OUR ONLY
CUSTOMER!



WHILE, AT
TED'S PLACE...

WHERE ARE
YOU GOING?

TO LOOK
UP MAJOR TAYLOR AT
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE —
HE KEEPS A FILE OF
UNUSUAL CRIMINALS...
WEIRDOS, NUTCASES...
MIGHT GIVE US A LEAD



STAY HERE AND
WATCH THE HOUSE, PURDEY...
AND STAY PUT 'NO RUSHING
OFF ON YOUR OWN!



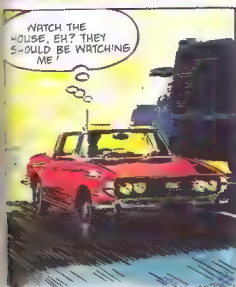
THEY'RE WASTING THEIR
TIME. NOW IF I HAD SOME-
THING TO SELL, HOW WOULD
I CONTACT MY CLIENTS
DISCREETLY?



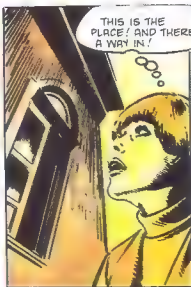
THE SMALL ADS
IN THE NEWSPAPER OF
COURSE! WHY DIDN'T I
THINK OF THAT
BEFORE?



AHA! THERE IT IS!
'CONTACT MIDAS AT
257, ST PATRICK'S
STREET'



WATCH THE
HOUSE, EH? THEY
SHOULD BE WATCHING
ME!



THIS IS THE
PLACE! AND THERE'S
A WAY IN!



LUCKY THE
WEATHER'S WARM...
THEY'VE LEFT THE
WINDOW OPEN!



NOW YOU
CAN TELL ME
WHY YOU NEED
MIDAS' SPECIAL
SERVICES...

THE PRINCESS
OF BOLTANIA
IS IN LONDON,
VISITING AN
EXHIBITION OF
PRICELESS GOLD
ANTIQUITIES!



THE PRINCESS'
DEATH WOULD
SPARK OFF A
REVOLUTION IN
BOLTANIA... THAT
WOULD SUIT MY
COUNTRY WELL...

I SEE... ALL
IT WOULD
NEED IS FOR
MIDAS TO
MINGLE WITH
THE GUESTS
AND OFFER THE
PRINCESS A
HAND!



THERE'S
SOMEONE OUTSIDE!
STEPHEN! PETER!
GET THEM!



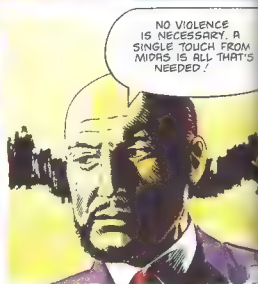
A
WOMAN!

STEED'S ASSISTANT.
SHE'S DANGEROUS!



I'LL
FINISH
HER!

NO VIOLENCE
IS NECESSARY. A
SINGLE TOUCH FROM
MIDAS IS ALL THAT'S
NEEDED!



THE MIDAS
EXHIBITION
OPENS IN AN
HOUR...

OUR MEN ARE IN
POSITION... AFTER
THE PRINCESS'
DEATH THERE'LL BE
CHAOS... WE JUST
STEP IN AND LIFT
THE GOLD...



BACK AT
STEED'S HOUSE...

TAYLOR CAME
UP TRUMPS, IT
SEEMS THERE WAS
AN EX-BIOLOGIST
NAMED TURNER
WITH AN INSATIABLE
PASSION FOR
GOLD!

NOW WE
JUST HAVE TO
FIND HIM...



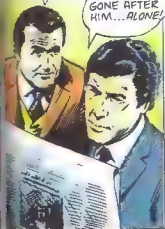
PURDEY!
WHERE ARE
YOU?



LOOK HERE, STEED...
THIS ADVERTISEMENT
HAS BEEN MARKED...

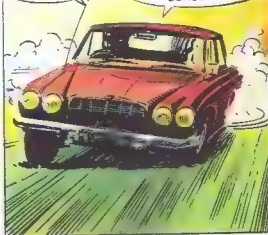
PURDEY'S GOT A LEAD
ON MIDAS.. SHE MUST HAVE
LEFT THE PAPER FOR
US TO FIND!

SHE'S
GONE AFTER
HIM... ALONE!




STEP
ON IT,
GAMBIT!


I'M DOING
WHAT I CAN... IT'S A
JAGUAR, NOT
CONCORDE!



HURRY!
GET ON WITH IT...
IN AN HOUR IT'LL BE
TOO LATE!



WE MUST GET TO THE EXHIBITION—THEY'RE GOING TO KILL THE PRINCESS OF BOLTANIA



THANK GOODNESS THE MUSEUM IS ONLY A FEW MINUTES FROM HERE




HURRY! THE PRINCESS HAS ALREADY ARRIVED



LET US THROUGH!

THERE'S NO TIME TO EXPLAIN, INSPECTOR... YOU'RE ABOUT TO HAVE A MURDER ON YOUR HANDS!



LORD SALISBURY... THE COUNTESS OF BEDFORD



YOUR HIGHNESS... THAT'S LORD MIDAS!

WHAT THE



DON'T TOUCH HIS HAND! IT'S DEADLY!

GENTLEMEN... THE MIDAS AFFAIR IS OVER!

I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD HAVE KILLED HER BEFORE!



A LITTLE LATER, AFTER OUR FRIENDS EXPLAIN TO THE PRINCESS THE DANGER SHE HAD FACED...

I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH... I HOPE YOU WILL VISIT ME IN BOLTANIA...

YOU MEAN PURDEY? I THINK IT'S TIME SHE SHOULD STOP HOME... AND WATCH THE HOUSE



Avengography No.1

STEED

the perfect gentleman agent

Steed, John Steed. What can be said about the world's most typically British gentleman adventurer that is not already to be found hidden within countless Eyes Only files inside safes and computer banks around the secret service agencies of the entire globe. East and West.

Steed is a jack of all trades — and master of every last one of them. Master-spy? Definitely. Master-horseman? Superbly. Master-shot? Deadly! Master-factician? Definitely! Master-driver? Speedily. Master-memory? Brilliantly! Master-spymaster? Incredibly.

In short, the veritable mastermind.

Of any team he collects around him, at home base, or on overseas assignments in Europe or the Americas, Steed is No. 1. The pivot, the hub — the experience. What he says, goes. What he says will happen — goes down.

He knows the espionage game inside out. He's lived through it all (some jest he's been around since the days of Mata Hari), and he's nearly died more times than he cares to remember. The years may have wrought changes in the framework of both his build, his

age, and his work. Come to that, he might even have changed homes, and become, off-duty, the country squire he was always partial to becoming. But his outlook remains as firm and as steadfast as it ever was.

Like any true Britisher, Steed still knows that Britannia Rules.

And he's sworn to defend her shores from her multivarious and nefarious enemies. To his last dying breath — 'If that's absolutely necessary, old boy!'

Not that anyone would seriously expect Steed to be caught napping, guinea-down, blown-up, or tricked into some fatal submission. Not John Steed...

No, no, Steed, as all Whitehall knows (probably the Kremlin, too), will eventually pass on — in his bed at Steed's Stud, gazing with adoration out of the window at his superb horses with a glance toward the ravishing nurse tending him... and the glass of the best, the very best mark you, bubbly in his hand.

Anyway, as we all know, only too well in this increasingly rough and tumble day and age, true British gents never die. They just fade away.



NEW AVENGERS

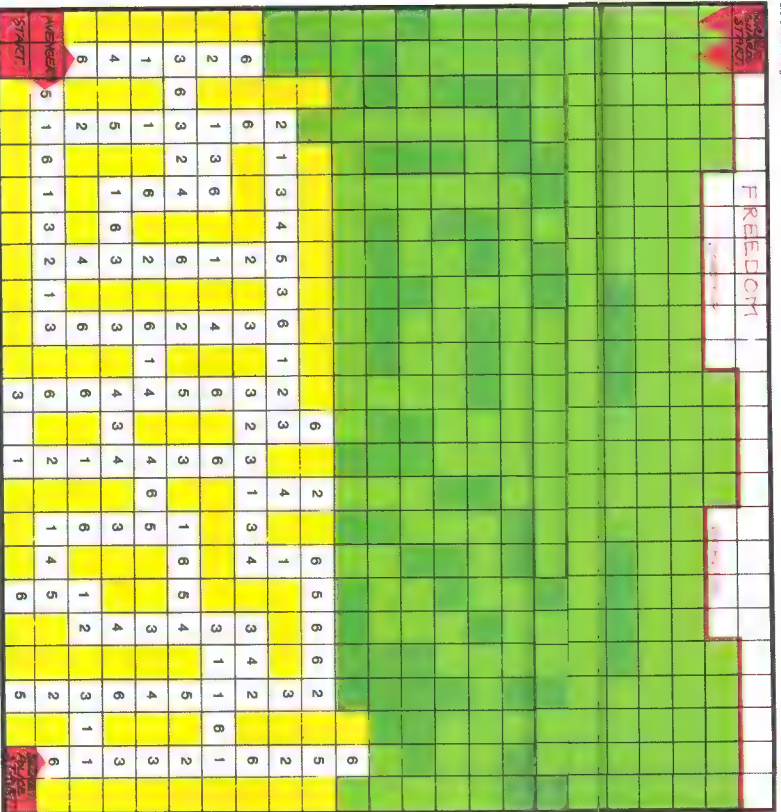
Dash for Freedom

YOU NEED: 1 die, 6 counters of same colour and 3 counters of a different colour. **TEAMS:** The game is played in two teams. One player represents the team of New Avengers and the other represents the team of the town's police and border guards (don't make one team!) Each player or team throws alternately. **OBJECT:** After completing a secret mission The New Avengers make a run for the safety of the border, however they have to get clear of the town first, so they face double danger from (1) the pursuing secret police and (2) the border guards. If an opposing player lands on your square then you are out of the game.



Numbered squares. The number shown on these squares must be thrown before proceeding.

Clear squares. Move according to number thrown on dice.



**JOANNA
LUMLEY**



**-the steely beauty
that is Purdey**

A thousand faces, scores upon scores of eager auditions — as many as 300. Three months of great expectations for many. Screen-tests for a chosen few. And finally, the actress to be John Steed's sixth crime-busting lady was found. Joanna Lumley, Kashmiri-born daughter of a British Gurkha major, an Army-brat globetrotter for the first eight years of her life. A Taurus, rubbing the height chalk at 5-ft. 8-in. and the tape at 34-24-35. A girl-woman who matches her legs — sleek and she never give up...

At first glance, except it's always much more than a glance where the Lumley looks are concerned, she seems the personification of the archetype successful English model girl. Exquisite beauty. Immaculate make-up and hair-style. Svelte figure. Upper-class accent — liberally sprinkled with the odd 'dee-vine' and 'nauper'.

And sure enough, before television made her as familiar as the wallpaper, her face was recognizable from all the top glad rags, fashion magazines. But talk to Joanna, and she goes far beyond the model norm. The beauty remains — and remains incandescent, of course. Her conversation is sparkling, frank, natural, as lively as well as lovely. She's vivacious, witty, highly intelligent and very amusing.

And talented? Well, that goes without saying... Athletic as well as dramatic is her art. She was literally a great sport at school, and completed her two-week intensive fitness course before becoming Burdley with an insurance clan. Riding motor-cycles like Barry Sheene. Turning sports-cars at a sixpence, or anyone could find one. Swinging through para-troopers' assault courses at Alderhot to the Johnny Weismüller manner born. If we'd found Joanna when she was nine, I suspect the show's writer-producer Brian Clemens, she'd have won a couple of Olympic gold medals by now.

She has won, instead, the hearts and minds of her male audience — and indeed, enormous support from her feminine

watchers as well — in 122 countries and 35 languages. When I think about that, I feel it's inhuman and completely disproportionate to what and who I am.

Ah! Modest, too. To find the who and what she is, we need to examine her life-times. She was born May 7, 1948, in Srinagar, Kashmir, in India, where her father was a major in the Gurkhas. Like all Indian men he couldn't call any place his country — home for long. Wherever he was posted, his family went, too. From India to Hong Kong, back to England for a spell, on to Singapore, England again (where Joanna started school), she was four by now, and back out to Kuala Lumpur in Malaya.

Joanna still remembers the first time she saw her mother-land. 'I expected it to be all green and beautiful... then I saw South-american blocks. I said I couldn't believe it!'

She returned home again and shuffled between various aunts while her parents stayed abroad. Malaya wasn't the safest spot on the globe at the time. When her father was appointed to a War Office position, the family reunited again in a huge, grim house in Epsom Surrey. The address was 91, West Hill Avenue. But we called the house 'Hole... it was so spooky.'

After a second spell at her first British school — the Micheldene Primary School at Richmond, Kent — Joanna received the main part of her public school education at St. Mary's Anglican Convent, near Hastings, Sussex. She liked the school, but not herself. She was, so she says, 'fat, spotty and a thoroughly dreary adolescent.' Hard to believe.

'It was a good place. I was happy there. There were no about sensible nuns. We didn't have to keep dropping curtsies or crossing ourselves. They were good teachers, nice people. But they nearly expelled her for smoking. She was getting quite a few B marks, too, failed her scholarship to university, though doing well in linguistics — Latin, German, Italian and French.

At seven I had ambitions to be an actress. But that soon gave way to several other things — art, horse-riding, Prime Minister, ballet dancer... But I grew too tall for that. So then, she played all the same roles for the school plays.

She tried to enter the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, with little luck, and so began earning her independence as a £5-a-week assistant in a Habitat-type shop in Tottenham, Kent. 'I never make a secretary of anything like that. The job was boring, but I had to do it as less.



Particularly on the day that Joanna saw herself, or rather her potential future, turn up in the shop. 'A beautiful girl wearing a big fur coat breezed in, looking a million dollars. I felt a bit small and mousey and thought to myself, "Wow! Joanna, my girl, there's something going on somewhere that you don't know about — maybe it's time you went out and found it."

Which meant London. Which meant modelling. Off went Joanna 'to seek my fortune, as they say, in the great smokey metropolis, staying with an aunt in Earls Court.' And off to the Lucie Clayton modelling school. Very off! 'You're perfectly awful, darling,' she was told. 'You're fat and boring and ugly. Go away!' She didn't, signing on as a £12 a month pupil. 'Perhaps after a month or so we might be able to do something with you...'

They did; or more likely, Joanna did. We told you, she never gives up...

She came top of her class, and was soon 'walking up and down at

Debenhams in the model suit department for £8 a week... so I escaped to photographic modelling.' The good life. Working practically every day, and all over the place, from Paris to Rome, from Moscow ('so very depressing and dismal') to North Africa. Her face and fetching form appeared in *Queen*, *Vogue*, *Harpers Bazaar*, *Nova*, London and Italian newspapers and TV commercials. Three very full years Up to five jobs a day — £120 a week. 'And never saving a penny,' she adds with a Lumley grin.

She had her baby son — James, ten years old now — and quit modelling. Or vice-versa. She was suddenly out of work for a year. She was broke. Giving up? You must be joking!

In 1968 she met film star Richard Johnson at a party. 'Ah!' she thought, 'this is where I step across...' Into acting. Joanna reasoned if you wanted a bottle of milk, you asked a milkman; therefore if you wanted a film, you asked the star. She did just that. 'He replied that he just happened

to be in a film, *Some Girls Do*, at Pinewood, and perhaps I'd like to say a line in it. I would — and did. My classical debut was "Yes, Mr Robinson." Two days work.'

She followed all the necessary advice for a novice, got herself an Equity actors' union card, and an agent. She went into stage repertory at Canterbury ('I loved the city, hated the plays') and wound up in the controversial James Bond film, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. It was the first 007 movie without Sean Connery. Male model George Lazenby took his place, opposite Diana Rigg (Steed's fourth partner in *The Avengers*). Two months' work this time, including dubbing the voices of a whole line up of international beauties in German, Chinese and Norwegian accents.

'In it, too,' she recalls, 'was Telly Savalas, complete with his ear-lobes taped back... he and his double shaved their heads twice a day. Telly is a very entertaining man. A good man.'

She made more films, *Tam Lin* with Ava Gardner, which was





never even ready for release after ten years; and her biggest starring break in *The Breaking of Bumbo*. Except this, too, has never been released. The *Bumbo* producers hailed Joanna as one of the stars-to-be of the 70's. They were right, of course. But they didn't work the magic — *The New Avengers* did, in which Joanna is really an all-action lady of the 80's, anyway.

'Success, so-called is like a treacherous lover,' comments Joanna. 'It's any place it wants to put you any time. When I got the *Bumbo* film I tried not to grin too much on the street. But I came out of the film with nothing to show except a very small cheque.'

'After those films, I made *Games That Lovers Play* with Richard Wattis and Jeremy Lloyd. Jeremy and I were married during the film... We had a short, turbulent marriage which resulted in a very good friendship.'

The Lumley luck seemed to be fading out; even her role of a laboratory assistant in Vincent Price's *The Abominable Dr Phibes* ended up on the famous cutting-room floor. Then the West End stage came to Joanna's res-

cue. She chose to join the Brian Rix farce, *Don't Just Lie There — Say Something* — instead of playing Diana Rigg's Emma Peel role in a stage version of *The Avengers*. Her play lasted ten months longer and Joanna made the screen version as well — 'in a basement off Fleet Street... more horrific than *The Exorcist* it was!'

At the same time I made a host of television appearances. One BBC series was titled *It's Awfully Bad For Your Eyes, Darling!* That was amusing to play — well, a gruelling but necessary experience. Very gruelling; ill health forced her to leave the series and recuperate with her parents and later in Switzerland.

'The next job? The last *Dracula* film... well, it was the last one that Chris Lee was in. Originally it was titled *Dracula Is Dead and Well and Living in London* — which I thought quite funny. They changed it later to *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*. I played a heroine, but heroine parts were getting thin on the ground and I was turning into roles as the rich bitch type... pretty nasty to everybody.'

In Nottingham, she appeared in revue — singing, dancing and gagging it up... and her eight episodes in *Coronation Street* brought that mammoth serial's fans' wrath heavily upon her head. 'Because I broke Ken Barlow's heart. He proposed, "Marry me!" and I declined with "No — you're a bore!"'

So I wasn't forgiven for being such a horrid thing. The actual cast were charming, lovely, sweet people. They couldn't have been nicer to me. I found the same warm reaction when I did a spell on *General Hospital*.'

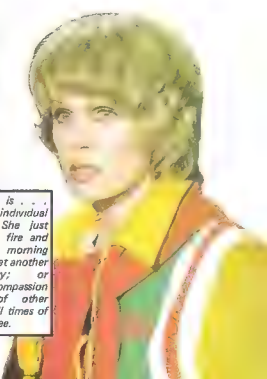
But another Lumley lull was in the wings. She did nothing particularly memorable for almost three years — apart from John Osborne's play, *The End of Me Q!* *Cigar*, the first of *The Cuckoo Waltz* comedy series and appearances on BBC2's *Call My Bluff* panel game — 'interspersed with lovely things like TV commercials.'

'Being an actress,' stresses Joanna Lumley, 'is slog, slog, slog. If there's any glamour in it, I've yet to discover it... The times I've sat thinking "What on earth can I do?" with tears racing down my face. Months and months out of work, begging people to do a £10 a week lunchtime play, writing off to all the rep companies — and getting no replies. And I mean this was not nine years ago when I started, but about a year ago...'

She was even thinking of returning to modelling when Joanna decided to have a final fling.

The girl who never gives up heard about the search for Purdey in *The New Avengers*. 'I tried very, very hard for it because I wanted to do it. I made a great effort because I liked the part and it's fun to do.'

Even more so to watch.



Steed Report: Joanna is . . . Joanna. A highly individual person. I love her! She just radiates. Whether with fire and brimstone early in the morning when confronted with yet another irritating inadequacy; or conversely, with deep compassion and understanding of other people's problems, at all times of the day. — Patrick Macnee.

LIGHTS...
CAMERA...
ACTION!



Stuart Purdy and Gareth Hunt, tough, self-reliant characters who, unassisted, subdue spies, mangle machines and vanquish villains on our screens each week. But when Patrick Macnee, Joanna Lumley and Gareth Hunt are faced with the task of bringing these heroic characters to full, fighting life, they have to rely on a little outside help... for their own safety, if nothing else, and the man they usually call in is Ray Austin, a stuntman, fight arranger and director of vast experience and

know-how, the result of nearly twenty years in the business.

The New Avengers, being an all-action adventure series, relies heavily on fight scenes and stunts to keep the story moving at a high pace, so Austin has plenty of work to keep himself occupied. And plenty of variety, too. One day he may be arranging for Gareth Hunt to lose control of his car and wind up in a ditch; the next day might be spent carefully arranging a fight between Joanna Lumley and three thugs, and the third might see all three of our

heroes narrowly escaping death from a massive blast. All of which have to be worked out, arranged, rehearsed, checked and double checked before the scene actually appears before the cameras. Actors are very valuable people, and Austin is responsible for making sure they don't get injured while giving their all for a realistic effect. If one of the stars ended up in hospital for two or three weeks, the money wasted on lost shooting time would run up to a frightening total. Stuntmen and Stand-ins, of course, are paid to

take risks . . . but if something goes wrong, they risk not only losing the opportunity to work, but sometimes their lives as well.

What then makes a man take up this most dangerous of games for a living? Different people have different reasons, naturally, but a love of risk and adventure seems to have been with Ray Austin, now 45, since he was a boy. He was a big lad, and he grew up in a tough area of London, Islington. 'Ossie', as he was known, was not one to shun boyhood brawling and became reasonably good with his fists . . . some fights he won, some he lost.

Not for him the safe retreat from danger, either. As a youngster during the war, when most of the civilian population was bedding down in the Underground stations to avoid the bombing, 'Ossie' would be the one to take people's orders for fish and chips, go 'topside' and return later with a battered suitcase full of food. After the war, he became a bookie's runner in Soho, another tough area of the nation's capital. The world of film and television must have seemed a very long way off indeed . . .

Apart from being prepared to take risks, though, a stuntman also has to be extremely fit, all the time. Ray Austin started his training on this side early too. He was naturally good at gymnastics and physical training at school, and when called up for National Service, served his time as a P.T. Instructor. Unfortunately, when his call-up came to an end, the only similar work he could find was part-time, as an instructor to a London Boy's Club.

Finally, he decided to try his fortune elsewhere, and headed for Hollywood, still uncertain of exactly what he wanted to do. But the Hollywood dream factory soon found a place for him . . . and many like him . . . as one of a large team of stuntmen employed on Stanley Kubrick's sprawling epic *Spartacus*. And in his first job he found himself not so much a stuntman as a target man . . . picking his way up a hillside, bare to the waist, while soldiers on the hill-crest rolled burning bushes

down at Austin and his fellow-stuntmen. The only problem was that the bushes, which were genuinely ablaze, were supposed to hit the stuntmen, who of course, had no protection. You dodged some, the others hit you. Austin was lucky though . . . he got away with a few burns and blisters, but nothing too serious.

Austin worked with Hitchcock next, and then there were many more Hollywood films. He was learning all the time, as each film required different forms of stunts, moving from being burned alive to the slightly less painful perils of falling off buildings and smash-

ing up cars. There were injuries along the way, naturally: he was badly burned while doing stunts for a film called *'The Cheaters'* in 1960, but injuries are occupational hazards for stuntmen, and it wasn't long before he was back in harness once more.

From doing stunts, it was only a short step to arranging them, another short step from there to arranging fight sequences; and a final step to the actual direction of entire television shows. Austin worked through all the stages of his return to Britain, finding his talents much in demand for action



series of all kinds. Among his credits are various episodes of *The Saint*, *Department S*, *Space 1999* and many others. And, of course, *The New Avengers*.

Ray Austin has been involved with the series since way back, when it was simply *The Avengers*, creating special fighting styles for all the previous girls, Honor Blackman, Diana Rigg, and Linda Thorson, as well as for Joanne Lumley. These days, though, he is rarely seen on the screen stunting or acting, preferring to spend more time behind the camera. He has directed several episodes of *The New Avengers*, while continuing to arrange the fight sequences for other episodes as well.

He has the highest regard for Joanne Lumley and Gareth Hunt, who do virtually all their own stunts. But both of them had to prove their toughness before they got the parts. Gareth Hunt had to kick in a door... Joanne Lumley had to jump over a sofa, kick a gun from a villain's hand, and then deliver a kick to his chin. All that before the series had even begun! A couple of weeks commando training with the army toughened them up even more.

A fight scene lasting thirty seconds on the screen may take all day, or more, to shoot. Every move has to be carefully worked

out in advance, taking into account where the fight is being staged, what props are being used, what kind of opponent our heroes are up against, and many other things. Then a series of camera angles have to be worked out, for the fight is always shot in sections, rather than all the way through. A punch to the jaw, for instance, must be photographed from such an angle that it looks like the fist is connecting without actually doing so... no one likes getting hit, and actors can't afford to walk around with a bruised jaw or a black eye for several days! Then there are close up reaction-shots to be fitted in as well: a look of determination on Purdey's face; a pained wince from her adversary as the blow is supposed to be landed. A single punch might be filmed from two or three different angles, each equally satisfactory. Finally, all these different pieces of film are taken to the cutting room, where the best shots are selected and edited



together to give the final all action sequence. Fight arranging, as we can see, is much, much more than merely knowing how to hit someone!

Life is a lot more peaceful for Ray Austin these days, since he moved behind the camera... and it becomes even more peaceful when he leaves the set and returns home to his wife, Japanese actress Yauko Nagazumi. One can easily see how a man who spends most of the day organising mayhem might appreciate a little quiet in the evening, for the pressures of working on a tightly scheduled television series are enormous, especially when one has to ensure the safety of the actors on top of everything else.

There are risks, of course, but as Austin says 'experience, care and rehearsal reduce the dangers.'

And he has a great deal of experience, holding the record (63 feet) for falling safely from a building, and at one time being one of the few stuntmen prepared to dive through a genuine plate glass window. But no one has ever been hurt in a film he directed, and he insists that he wouldn't ask anyone to do anything that he hadn't already tried himself. And as we can see, that means that Gareth Hunt or Joanne Lumley could turn up at the set one morning and find themselves asked to do virtually anything you can think of!



THE NEW AVENGERS



...ING, IN A SMALL
DON SUBURB...

NE PLACE
AKE A YOUNG
FOR A
IVE.

PATIENCE,
PURDEY..
WE'RE WAITING
FOR SOMEONE.



WHAT
MENT



THERE HE IS ' FRANK
GOFF, A MECHANIC. HE
WORKED ON PROFESSOR
ARONOV'S ROBOTS.

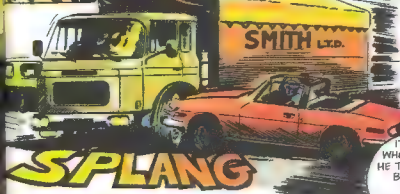
AH,
THE INFAMOUS
CYBERNAUTS!



THE CYBERNAUTS



YOU'VE LOST
YOUR MAN,
GAMBIT. AFTER
THEM!

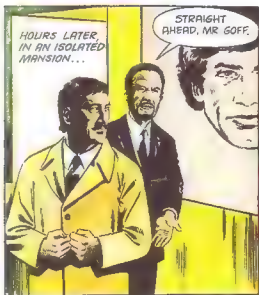


NOTHING
BROKEN?

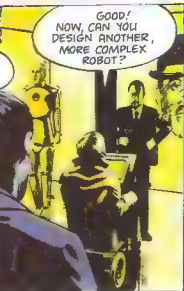
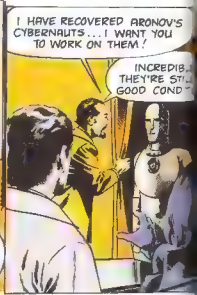
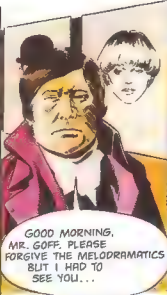
I'M O.K. . . BUT WHY
ARE YOU SO INTERESTED
IN GOFF?

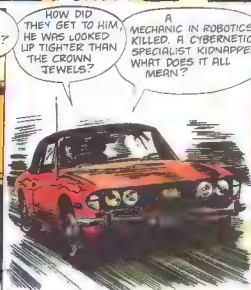
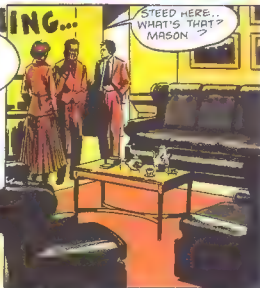
IT WAS STEED
WHO PUT HIM AWAY..
HE THINKS GOFF MAY
BE PLANNING
REVENGE!

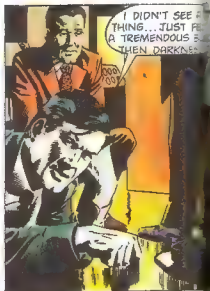
LOOKS
LIKE SOMEONE
ELSE HAS THEIR
EYE ON HIM!

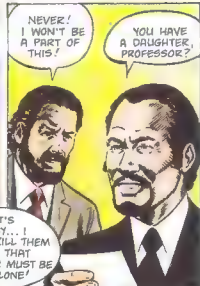
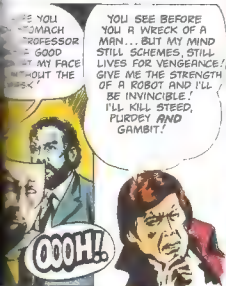


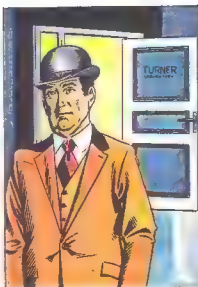
STRAIGHT
AHEAD, MR GOFF.











GENERAL
PURDEY...

FANTASTIC! NOW
I'M MORE THAN A
MAN! YOU HAVE
MADE ME INTO A
CYBERNAUT!



I HAVE SUCH
POWER . SUCH
STRENGTH!

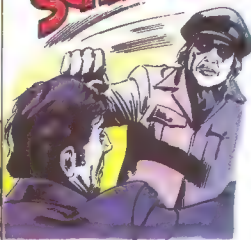
AM I
FREE TO GO
NOW?

LATER, PROFESSOR.
I STILL NEED YOU.
WHAT IF THIS BODY
SHOULD BREAK DOWN?
I MUST GO NOW...
VENGEANCE IS MINE,
AT LAST!



LATER, AS GAMBIT ARRIVED AT
PURDEY'S FRONT DOOR...

SCHLACK!



HE???

WELL DONE,
PURDEY. YOU
GUESSED
CORRECTLY!



FIGHT IF
YOU MUST, YOU
DON'T HAVE A
HOPE..



YOU'RE
THROUGH,
PURDEY...
FINISHED!

BACK AT KANE'S MANSION,
PROFESSOR MASON
CATCHES HIS GUARD,
OFF-GUARD!





ROOM AT THE TOP



This is it. The house of the year. The ideal home for the ideal secret agent. The ideal English gentleman — in fact, Britain's most eligible bachelor, apart from a certain young man who lives over the shop at the end of the Mall.

Steed's Stud, he calls it. For it is here, among the rolling greenery of the unmatchable English countryside, here among the better things of life — Steed's life — 'the good brandy, a '28 claret, Royal Ascot and the click of leather against willow' that John Steed indulges himself. And his most favoured past-time(s).

Breeding horses — and entertaining beautiful women. (Yes, that's the order he listed them in). The word around some stuffier quarters of Whitehall is that John Steed, hero extraordinary, has mellowed somewhat in recent years...like one of his vintage wines in his cellar. Rubbish! By his own admission, he's even 'perkier'. Hardly surprising, considering the number of times he has put his life on the line for Queen and Country, and survived to tell the tale — which he does in typically mellifluous style over one of his superlative dinner-parties, which seem to drift out of the ether like one of those after-dinner-mints TV commercials.

A cat who has thus far gone through at least triple the usual nine lives, Steed simply finds he can relax much more these days.

He has two highly capable assistants — 'more partners, really... and good friends.'

If and when necessary, they can tackle some dastardly plot to destroy — or at least rearrange — the world-as-we-know-it, and Steed can calmly run things from home. But, of course, when he's required, he's out there in the field — the continual battlefield — with Purdey and Gambit.

More often than not, the magnificent three meet up for their campaign planning at Steed's place. Just a push on the accelerator out of town.

Like Steed himself, they love the place. No wonder! For his home is the final proof that, with effort, an Englishman's home can really be his castle. He has a veritable hospital like number of rooms, every last one of them adroitly filled with his impeccable taste in furnishings and fittings. And mementos by the hundred dozen...

Or what's left of them since one particularly nasty foe started popping off at them, trying to destroy them all, one at a time, and thereby the very fibre of the man reputed to be the coolest secret agent in the world. The sacred old Bentley out in the garage, for instance. That went up with a shocking bang. Steed was sad to see that go, although he had long seen the light about utilising such a stunning car.

'Villains,' he said one night

over one of the dinners we've mentioned, 'have no respect for such splendid machinery. So I kept it lovingly garaged for the occasional spin only. I mean... suppose during a car chase, someone were to scratch it. Worse still, shoot at it!'

Which is why, he switched to a mode of transportation more practical than beautiful — the Range Rover. Not to be denied having something superb on the road, he also ran a Big Cat, a wide-wheeled, highly polished road version of the Jaguar Racing Coupe. 'A docile monster,' draws Steed. 'It's capable of 200 MPH... It's hand-made — of course and tailored; and worthy stable-mate for the Bentley.'

Until the Bentley, enjoyed in its day by Mrs. Cathy Gale, Emma Peel and Tara King, was blown up...

Steed's few moments at Steed's Stud are spent tending — riding, exercising — a string of wonderful horses. Creatures every bit as gorgeous as the constant array of beautiful women who have been entertained in the house. There are, maybe, many of them passing through its portals. But as always, Steed retains a special place in his heart for his female partner in secret agency — the pulsating Purdey.

'I just adore his house,' says Purdey. Her own pad, however, could hardly be more different in style and setting to Steed's

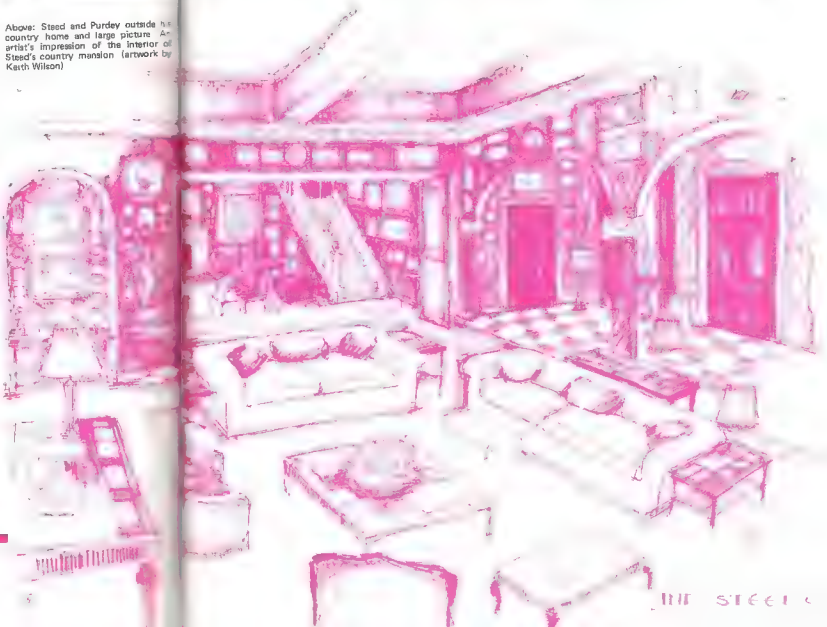
house.

Purdey lives in what she calls 'the biggest bed-sitter in the world.' Like Tara King before her, she favours basement quarters. She took a gutted basement in London, and refurbished it herself in 'feminine art decor style and colours.' Right down to the amusing idea of having a bedroom 'door' that is little more than a hanging curtain of beads.

The entire place accurately reflects the kind of fearless girl living there. Or so say people who have been there. Mind you, very few are the people allowed to visit Purdey's palace and penetrate the swinging curtain.

Steed is one, of course, Mike Gambit is another.

Above: Steed and Purdey outside his country home and large picture: An artist's impression of the interior of Steed's country mansion (artwork by Keith Wilson)



Steed chose them well. Gambit is as much as pure 1980's man as Purdey is a liberated feminine spirit of the '80s. She has, though, more charm, and indeed, like Steed, more style than Mike.

Gambit's quarters, for instance — also in the heart of London — are super deluxe and perhaps a shade overly modern. He has almost every electronic device yet invented by man — including a fully automated bed. Push a button in Gambit's pad, and you never know what might happen.

It's a playboy-robot's place, the kind that other agents with more money than sense — a

certain 007 for one — used to go in for. Back in the '60s. But then, Gambit has a lot of catching up to do.

And the way he, even more than Purdey, eyes the opulent splendours of Steed's Stud, it surely won't be long, before Mike Gambit puts away the push-button toys of the child, and moves into a flat, or house, more suited to a gentleman.

He doesn't have far to go to pick up tips on the kind of home he should have. Steed's Stud has all the answers. It's a house that is a home, something of a plush

headquarters, too. A house filled with owner's urbane élan and cool suavity. It is, above all, the house of an expert; a home built up from worldly-wise experience.

Purdey and Gambit have far to go to match Steed's sheer comfortability. In home and hearth — and come to think of it, in battle and action, as well. But they're learning. From the greatest teacher in the world. One of the few true gentlemen left in the world, who both understands and appreciates not just the good, but the very best things in life. And earns them all, every last one.

A basement flat for Purdey, but there's still enough fighting room.





A FLUID SITUATION

"An ark?" Purdey raised a speculative eyebrow, isn't that rather a strange thing for the army to be constructing . . . especially in the middle of the Welsh mountains?"

"Exactly," Captain Bohn said, spreading more blown-up photographs across the table. "But these satellite pictures from the Welsh Survey show it quite plainly."

"Plain as *'Dai'*, in fact," Steed put in, picking up one of the photographs and handing it to Gambit. "The question is . . . why?"

"We just don't know," Captain Bohn said wearily, rubbing his tired eyes. Obviously Military Intelligence had put a lot of work into the investigation before they finally agreed to call in outside assistance. "We're getting nowhere . . . we can't even get near the place."

"But they're one of your units, aren't they?" Gambit asked.

"SSU-5 . . . Special Service Unit 5 . . . one of the most highly trained, and highly secret units in the country. Every man picked for high intelligence, adaptability and endurance. The best we've got . . . every man a specialist . . . and then they decide to build an ark."

"Perhaps they know something we don't," Purdey put in brightly. "What's the weather forecast?"

Bohn gave her a brief look of annoyance, running his hand through his grey-flecked hair, then carried on, ignoring the interruption. "SSU-5 is one of those units that's fairly independent of GHQ. They know their job, and they get on with it. Sometimes there's no contact for weeks. But now they seem to have cut themselves off completely . . . no radio replies, the telephone lines are cut."

"But you've sent men up there, surely?" Steed asked, starting to become perturbed at the way the story was developing.

"Three times," Bohn said. "When the first party couldn't get through, General Mason decided to investigate personally. They shot him in the shoulder. . ." He paused as he saw the surprised expressions on his companions' faces. "The third time we tried to smuggle some men in inside the water tanker which makes a regular monthly delivery to the camp . . . they blew it up."

"Extremely irrational behaviour . . ." remarked Steed. "How about going in by helicopter?"

"They have missiles," Bohn said simply. "They're only fifty-odd men, but they're the best



Two armed soldiers give Steed & Co a hostile reception.

in the service. If we had to send other units against them . . . well, the slaughter would be unthinkable. And that, Steed, is why we've finally turned to you."

"But what are we supposed to do?" Gambit asked, baffled.

"I think we're supposed to go to Wales . . ."

Steed informed him.

"Did you know that the average cloud weighs 30,000 pounds?" Purdey remarked, looking up at the lowering grey sky.

"I'll make sure I'm not standing underneath if one suddenly plummets from the sky . . ." Steed told her, nosing the big Jaguar XJ12 along the narrow mountain road. "Still, you're right. . . the weather does look a bit heavy. Hardly the best day to go visiting."

"Hardly the best place to go visiting, either," Gambit said, from the back seat, checking his revolver again before sliding it back into its shoulder holster. "But I suppose this is the only way we'll find out what's going on."

Slowing to a crawl, Steed pushed the Jaguar round one last corner, and there before them was the guard post of the base, half a mile from the main buildings, nestling in a valley surrounded by even higher peaks . . . and somewhere in those lush green Welsh Hills, out of sighting in the enshrouding mist, was the ark.

A burst of machine gun fire suddenly stitched a neat row of bullet holes across the road ahead of them. Steed hit the brakes immediately, while Purdey ducked for cover at his side, but even before the car could stop, another shot rang out . . . a shot from a sniper's rifle. The front tyre blew out, and the car slewed across the road. In an instant, Steed and his companions tumbled out on the blind side and hit the ground, Gambit with his gun already in hand. Steed, fastidious as ever, reached back into the car for his bowler and umbrella, before cautiously poking his head round the front wing of the Jaguar to look up at the guard post.

Two men stood in front of the open wire-mesh gate, while another could be seen on a field-telephone in the guard post. Of the two in the open, the one with the high-powered rifle was keeping them covered through his telescopic sight; the one with the sub-machine gun took a few steps forward.

Cautiously, keeping his hands well away from his body, Steed slowly stood up. The soldiers regarded him coldly, unmoving. "Decidedly un-

friendly way you fellows have of greeting visitors..." he began, smiling disarmingly.

"Have you got any water in the car?" the sub-machine gunner barked sharply. Baffled, Steed glanced briefly down at Gambit and Purdey, then turned back.

"I think we've got a bottle in the boot somewhere..."

A shot cracked out from the rifle, and Steed instantly threw himself behind the car, his bowler spinning into Purdey's hands. There were neat holes punched in front and back of the hat. If Steed had hesitated a moment...

"My best bowler..." Steed said, looking deeply agrieved.

"I think these guys mean business, Marshal..." Purdey said, faking an American accent to cover up just how worried she really was.

"You bet they do..." Gambit told her, twisting the driving mirror to get a view of the guard-post. "There are two trucks coming down from the camp, full of gun-toting troops..." and they've got mortars, too!"

"Perhaps we should make a discreet withdrawal..." suggested Purdey.

"Perhaps we shouldn't," Gambit vetoed, glancing around. "If we leave the car there's no cover. They'll pick us off..."

The trucks had arrived at the gate now, and as Steed cautiously looked out, he could see the troops and mortar-crews jumping out and taking their positions. A lieutenant with a revolver barked

instructions.

"Listen!" Steed shouted. "I want to talk to your Commanding Officer!" He paused, waiting for a reply.

"They've got water down in the car..." he heard one of the sentries report to the lieutenant.

"We know what to do about that!" The officer replied. "Get those mortars into position!"

Steed shook his head, staring up at the sky. A drop of rain fell on his face. It just didn't make sense. Another raindrop hit him on the chin. Any second now, they'd be blown to kingdom come, and for what? More raindrops splattered onto him. And their strange obsession about water...

"It's raining!" Steed cried, suddenly.

"It's a good job you brought your broilly then," Purdey joked, forcing a smile in the face of death.

"But don't you see..."

"I see..." Gambit cut in, staring at the mirror. "They're pulling back..." panicking. They can't get into the trucks fast enough!"

And as Steed peered round the car, he could see the soldiers rushing away, throwing down their weapons, leaving their mortars overturned in the rush. Even the officer made no attempt to stop them, too busy himself in trying to bat off the raindrops and screaming in horror. With a muffled roar, the trucks' engines coughed into life, and then they were turning, heading back up the hill toward the main camp.

As the rain splattered down, turning into a heavy shower now, Steed saw that one of the troops had

been left behind... running after the trucks, waving his arms and yelling. The trucks didn't stop.

"I want him, Gambit..." Steed said quickly. "And I want him alive..."

Instantly, Gambit was up and running, gun in hand, heading toward the now deserted gate-post. But if the soldier kept running, it would be a hard task to catch him... and Gambit didn't dare get too near the main base yet...

The rain was beginning to pour down now, lashing across the hills. The soldier ahead of Gambit looked up briefly at the sky, and then suddenly threw himself to the ground, curling up in a ball. By the time Gambit reached him, he was whimpering hysterically.

Steed glanced briefly round the guard-post, noticing with surprise that all the plumbing had been ripped out of the rear room, then turned as Gambit entered with his moaning prisoner who, as soon as he was released, threw himself into a corner and stared around wide-eyed.

"Now, what's going on here?" Steed began, going over to the man. "Where's your C.O., Major Laura?"

Behind him, Gambit took off his jacket, shaking the rain from it. A drop of water hit the soldier on the face. He screamed and hid his face in his hands. Steed and the others looked down at him, puzzled.

"Hydrophobia?" Purdey asked no one in particular.

"He's certainly afraid of water..." Steed said thoughtfully. "And if all the men here are like him, that might explain why they've built the Ark. But what explains the hydrophobia?"

"I guess we'll only find that out in the main camp..." Gambit put in. "I suppose we'd better move on. Shall we tie him up?"

Steed looked briefly out of the window at the rain lashing against the guard-post. "I don't think we need to do that," he said. "Our friend won't be going anywhere for a while... not in that! Hold on while I get something from the car and I'll be with you..."

Moving forward cautiously under Steed's umbrella, the three of them made their way up the

Boldly, Steed faced the soldiers while Gambit kept a watchful eye

road to the base's main buildings. The entire place seemed deserted now, and Steed sent Gambit on a quick reconnaissance.

"Not a soul..." Gambit said, returning after five minutes. "But one encouraging thing... they seem to have left most of their weapons behind... wherever they've gone..."

"Up there..." Steed said, pointing up toward the crest of the hill that overlooked the base. Gambit looked up... and saw the ark: more than a hundred feet long, curved at bow and stern, made of solid wooden planks. There was virtually no superstructure, the mast hadn't been put in yet, and the whole thing was supported with huge wooden stays.

"Take an enormous flood to float that..." Purdey remarked, looking up the winding path that led up the hillside. "It's crazy... why would they do it?"

"Drugs," Gambit said. "Someone's got at the entire base..."

"But who?" Purdey asked. "It can't be anyone from outside, surely... base security was always too tight for that..."

"Must be someone on the inside then," Steed said thoughtfully, leading the way up the path. "A 'sleeper' agent... put here years ago, and only activated recently. He's probably up there with the rest of them, in the ark..."

Five minutes later, completely unchallenged, they stood on the deck of the ark. The rain beat down around them, but they could hear the sound of voices from below. Gun in hand, Gambit led the way below deck.

A great mass of soldiers covered at the far end of the ark. A moan went up as Steed put down his binoculars and shook the rain from it. Officers and men alike regarded them with horror-filled eyes... the newcomers were wet, and that was more than they could stand.

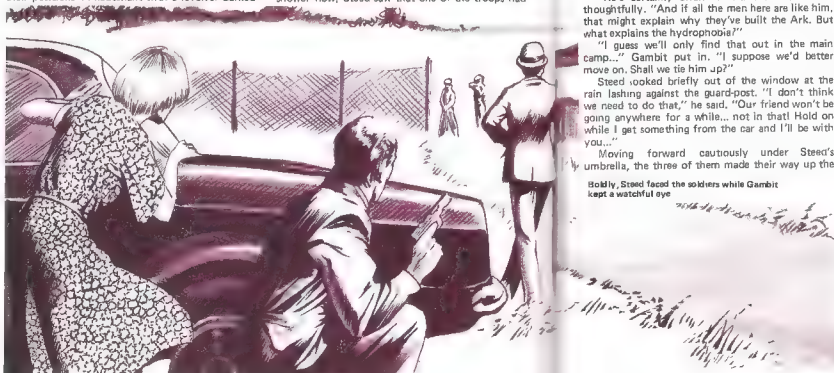
Steed handed the umbrella to Purdey, whispered to Gambit, then stood back to watch as his companions stalked forward toward the soldiers.

"On your feet, you men!" Gambit barked in his best military style. The soldiers shuffled nervously. Purdey brandished the still-damp umbrella. Immediately they were upright. Gambit smiled, then, glancing in his new-found power, snapped out more crisp orders.

"Two rows, down each side of the ark. Each man five feet apart from his neighbour! And stand to attention!"

Keeping well clear of Purdey and the wet umbrella, the soldiers cautiously took up their positions as ordered. Gambit turned back to Steed, looking baffled. "Well, there they are, just like you wanted them. Now what?"

"Now Purdey stays well back, and you come along and cover me while I take a little walk..." Smiling disarmingly, Steed walked up to the first man in the row, with Gambit close behind him, gun in hand. Casually, Steed unbuttoned his jacket, opened it, and showed the inside pocket to the first soldier; who suddenly moaned horribly and fell to the ground.





One by one, the panic-stricken soldiers backed away from Steed.

"Oh dear!" Steed remarked, and then moved on to the next man, opening his jacket once again. Almost instantly, the man leapt forward violently, spitting with rage. When he found Gambit's gun stuck in his face he backed off, pressing himself against the wall. The third man was already sweating by the time Steed reached him, and as Steed opened his coat, he fainted dead away.

So Steed continued down the line, opening his jacket, never letting the next man in line see what he was showing to the others. From the far end of the ark, Purdey watched in uncomprehending astonishment.

The twenty third man stood stock still as Steed approached and opened his jacket, then stared in confusion at what Steed was showing. Their eyes met for an instant, and then the man broke and ran up the ark.

"Stop him!" Steed yelled. "Stop him... or he'll drown you all!"

In an instant, there was total confusion as the other soldiers leapt toward the running man, and they all went down in a thrashing tangle of arms and legs. Gambit looked questioningly at Steed, who smiled, and opened his jacket. In his inside pocket was a small polythene bottle.

"Distilled water..." Steed explained. "Always keep a bottle in the car to top up the battery. He was the only one who didn't react like the others did, so he's obviously not drugged like they are..."

Before Gambit could say anything, Steed turned away, water bottle in hand, and waded into the mass of fighting men to rescue their captive. The drugged soldiers cringed back as he approached, and he had soon hauled the bruised and battered culprit to his feet. All the fight was knocked out of the man.

"I think you might try to find a radio that works," Steed called to Purdey. "Get Captain Bohn up here to take over the camp before it stops raining..."

"So this is our 'sleeper'," Gambit said, going through the man's pockets and checking his documents while they waited for Bohn to arrive. "Been in the army twelve years, and no one ever knew..."

"An experiment, right?" Steed said, staring hard at the man. "Your masters came up with this new drug to demoralise enemy troops, and you were the one chosen to try it out on your own mates. An army with hydrophobia's not going to be much good to anyone, is it..."

Shoulders slumped, the man nodded, and in doing so, admitted everything.

"Just one thing I don't understand, Steed," Gambit said, as he started binding the man's hands behind him. "If you want to make *everyone* afraid of water... well, how do you administer the drug to so many people without arousing suspicion?"

"That's simple," Steed grinned. "You put it in the water supply to start off with. You don't need to 'faucet' on anyone when you already have drugs on tap, do you?"

Avengography No.3

GAMBIT

the striking cobra

Those dark good looks, those penetrating eyes, set many a female pulse drumming. He's a brand new kind of secret agent. The masculine equivalent of Purdey — a pure 1980's man.

He's hip. He's chipper. Yet he dresses quietly, so as not to disappear ('a man with looks like that could never disappear,' says Purdey), but to merge more easily with the high-power world of espionage and corruption he has to enter every time his phone rings.

No loud-mouth, he's usually quiet. But as in the old Western movies 'yeah, too quiet'. Deceptively still. When he flares into action — run for your lives. When Gambit moves, he's often faster than the eye can follow. He strikes like a cobra.

He handles his — or any car — in similar fashion. Putting all his experience of Formula One racing to excellent use, he can turn his Jaguar XJ-S on a sixpence. 'Whatever that is... or was!'

Clearly, he is not a product of the 'right' schools. 'Whatever they are... or were!' Certainly, he clawed his way up in life, learning an awful lot *en route*. And we do mean, awful...

Maybe it's best not to attempt to dig too deeply into Gambit's background. There are certain shadows to him, that he tends to keep marked Private. Keep Out. Above all else, Gambit is a very *private* kind of individual.

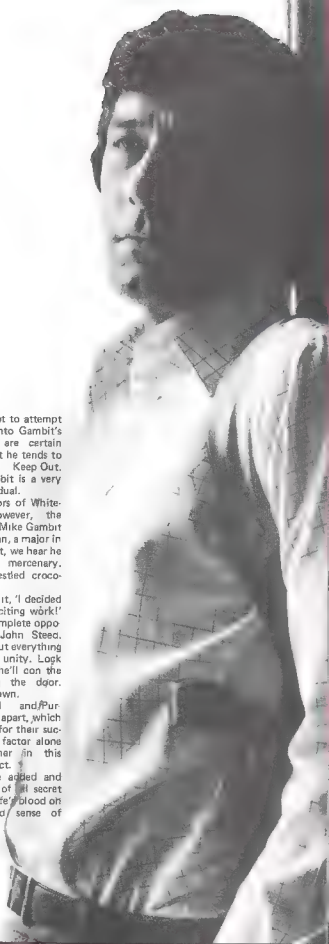
Along the corridors of Whitehallian power, however, the rumours have it that Mike Gambit was once an army man, a major in the paras. Before that, we hear he was (possibly) a mercenary. Before that, he wrestled crocodiles for a living.

'Then,' as he puts it, 'I decided to take up more exciting work!'

He is, then, the complete opposite of his chief, John Steed. Opposites in just about everything — but perfection in unity. Logk Steed in a cell and he'll con the jailer into opening the door. Gambit will kick it down.

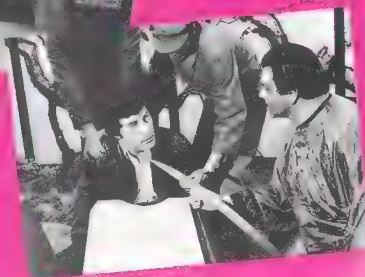
Gambit and Steed and Purdey too — are poles apart, which is the major reason for their success as a team. One factor alone welds them together in this fashion. Mutual respect.

Oh yes, and the added and most vital attribute of all secret agents putting their life's blood on the line. A shared sense of humour.



GARETH HUNT

-the days before Gambit



Steep Report: Gareth Hunt isn't a fellow Romanian. We're very original and there are many projects. He's a man full of innovative energy. A fine actor from the National Theatre, but also a man who has had wide experience gained in naval service all over the world — Patrick Macnee.

The name is Gareth Hunt. I was born in Battersea, London, moved to Mitchum in Surrey and I spent a pretty ordinary childhood. I wasn't any great academic, but I suppose I matured later. While I was at the Singlegate Secondary Modern School I was bright enough and did a bit of acting as a kid . . . kids' plays and so on. We did *Well and Truly All Your Own* with Huw Weldon. Things like that.

I wished to become an actor but my school was so difficult. I remember a Mrs. Bradbury typical of the school leaving careers woman. She looked at me and said, 'Ah! Hunt . . . You're quite tall. You'll make a good policeman . . . Next!!'

'And that was about it, really.'

'But I enjoyed school. The madness of it all. I suppose I always wrote good compositions. But spelling atrocious! But my ideas were great. Inventive . . . I enjoyed English, enjoyed creating stories.'

'Mathematics? Terrible!

'But I got a good deal out of sport, drama and science . . . this fascinated me, especially that you could blow up the Science Room quite easily.'

'And so I joined the Merchant Navy. Went to a training school at Bristol and at the grand old age of 15½ I was trouping around the world. I stayed in the service for six years . . . When we got to New Zealand, three of us jumped ship, a rather mad thing to do. We jumped at Napier, got a cab, and made the longest cab ride I've ever had. One hundred miles . . . Cost us eleven quid and two watches!

'We did odd jobs out there, got caught and were stuck in the nick. I got three months and it taught me a thing. I never wanted to do any more time in the nick!

'When I came home to Britain on leave, I used to work backstage as a stage hand at the Windmill and Covent Garden. That started my association with the theatre.'

'When I got out of the Merchant Navy, I had a pretty varied quota of jobs . . . I started in an ITV studio, moved across the board and took up a BBC design course. But, I always seemed to design things which were budgetless, meaning they could never be made . . . So I moved again. Digging up roads this time and door-to-door selling — I could fill your book with stories about that life! Then I was a representative for Hoover and a delightfully named shop fitting firm called Oswaldtwistle.'

'So I joined the Mount Vernon Theatre and acted at night — finally taking an audition and getting a place at the Webber Douglas School in South Kensington. I spent two years studying drama there.'

'My first job was at the Ipswich Arts Theatre . . . then I did a ten-line part on television about the British Raj in India — shot in Wales! Still, I thought it marvellous, great fun charging about with bayonets and things. Then came the Bristol Old Vic and I came back to London for six months in *Conduct Unbecoming*.

'Back into rep (repertory) and two years at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry playing most of the leading parts — from *Twelfth Night* to *West Side Story* . . . I was most glad of that at the time, but more especially now.'

'From the Belgrade I went to the Royal Court back in London and did bits and pieces on television while at Watford. I did a year with the Royal Shakespeare Company and now I'm with the National Theatre . . .'

'So, in a way, if I ever had any sort of theatrical ambition, I've answered it. I thought I'd love to work for the Royal Court, the Royal Shakespeare and the National. All this I've completed. But perhaps not yet to the extent I would have liked to do . . . especially at the National Theatre, where I'd like to do a lot more . . .'



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